

President of the Human Rights Council

Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “Social and economic measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”

24 January 2023 at 10:00 a.m., United Nations Headquarters New York

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Chair of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva, for the invitation to address you today, in my capacity as President of the Human Rights Council, at the opening of this Special Meeting.

In Geneva, we often talk about the need to strengthen the relationship between the Human Rights Council and the New York-based bodies of the United Nations. I am sure that you have heard this many times. And meetings like this one today actually allow us to do so. Let me add that from our side, the ECOSOC President has been briefing the Human Rights Council on the discussions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development every year since 2018. The Council has also organized intersessional meetings that have contributed to the thematic reviews of the High-level Political Forum. Cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council is in place and I am glad to not only build upon it, but also to raise awareness of the importance of enhancing the collaboration between the two bodies.

In this regard, I wish to highlight several good examples of how the Human Rights Council can support ECOSOC’s important work aimed at preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms produce a wealth of information and recommendations that can serve as an invaluable resource for other UN bodies. The Council also provides early warnings as well as technical advice and expertise on human rights issues and situations around the world.

Many human rights crises have been preceded by warnings from the Human Rights Council and its special procedures and accountability mechanisms. For example, in June 2016, the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria reported that genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were being committed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) against the Yazidis.

Moreover, the Council regularly engages in interactive dialogue with the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the progress made in discharging her duties. The Special Adviser will also take part in an inter-sessional meeting of the Council this year to mark the 75th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. More of this kind of collaboration would only benefit the system and facilitate prevention.

Another great example is the Human Rights Council's work in technical assistance and capacity-building. In March of last year, the Secretary-General reported to the Human Rights Council on technical assistance and capacity-building that support States in the implementation of their international human rights obligations. This report focused on the correlation between a society's enjoyment of and commitment to human rights and its resilience to crisis. It highlighted the need to integrate human rights in United Nations common analysis and programming; to strengthen synergies between the United Nations and partners; and to increase resources and expertise for technical assistance and capacity-building programmes. When States require assistance to implement recommendations, the Human Rights Council is well placed to facilitate discussions in this regard. And it's important to point out that this technical assistance is available to all Member States from any region.

In addition to alerting the international community to the risk of immediate crises and facilitating technical assistance, the Human Rights Council regularly develops international human rights norms and standards and considers social and economic measures to address root causes of crises. In this regard, the Council works on a number of social and economic issues such as the widespread targeting of minorities through hate speech in social media; the effects of foreign debt on economic, social and cultural rights; and to the eviction of indigenous peoples from their land.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are often results of long-standing human rights violations and economic hardship. In order to make greater achievements in the prevention of these crimes, our efforts to strengthen collaboration between the Human Rights Council and other UN bodies and mechanisms need to continue. The Human Rights Council's expertise can provide useful support in this regard. At the same time, the main message is simple. To prevent atrocity crimes in the long-term, implementing all human rights and advancing the 2030 Agenda are essential.

I wish you fruitful discussions today and look forward to hearing the outcome of your deliberations.